



New York is least free state in America, think tank claims

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The libertarian CATO Institute labeled New York as the least free state in the nation thanks to high taxes, a heavy debt load and rent controls.

“New York has been the least free state in the country for a long time,” the study said.

“Economic freedom is the most significant weakness, but the state has not kept up with the rest of the country on personal freedom either.”

The report suggests New York cut taxes, pay down its debts and slash spending.

It also calls for the Empire State to abolish its popular rent control law.

“New York’s local tax burden is twice that of the average state: 8.5 percent of income in FY 2015,” the study found. “This is a dramatic rise from the early 2000s, when it was 7 percent.”

The report also slammed New York City and New York State for a lack of “school choice,” even though both allowed charter school expansions.

The study gave New York props for below average incarceration rates and taking steps towards legalizing marijuana, including its limited medical marijuana program.

But, it also found that “tobacco freedom is the worst in the country because of smoking bans and stratospheric taxes (\$4.30 a pack in 2015 dollars in 2016),” which the report later described as “so high as to be almost tantamount to prohibition.”

High cigarette taxes and a smoking ban were signature health policies for former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who backed the policies as a way to cut down disease and improve the health of residents.

Tyrone Stevens, a spokesman for Gov. Andrew Cuomo, dismissed the findings as the product of a “right-wing” organization.

“Regardless of what this right-wing think tank says, under this administration, New York became the first big state to give the LBGTQ community the freedom to marry, gave workers the freedom to be with their families during times of crisis with the strongest paid family leave

program in the nation, and helped provide freedom from poverty with a \$15 minimum wage and free public college tuition for middle and working class New Yorkers,” said Stevens.

“During the same time, middle class taxes were cut and a property tax cap was put in place, while unemployment was slashed in half and private sector jobs grew to a record high.”